

# Comparison and contrast of sappho's poems with egyptian love poems

[Life](#), [Love](#)



## ? Comparison and Contrast of Sappho's Poems with Egyptian Love Poems

The ideas of love in the Egyptian love poems are almost similar to Sappho's idea of love, but there is a difference in the way they approach it. In the Egyptian love poem, love is portrayed more erotic and passionate and the reader sees things from both the male and female's point of view while in Sappho's poetry, love is more romantic and passionate and talks more about the deeper feelings of the characters. Egyptian love poems idea of love is more about every form of love, whereas love for Sappho is based purely more on an emotional view of love.

Each Egyptian love poem and Sappho's love poems express a similar theme but their method and imagery is quite different. The Egyptian love poems are generally lighter while Sappho's poems are more serious. The Egyptian poem "I passed close by his house" contains the lines, "How joyfully does my heart rejoice, my beloved, since I first saw you... My heart leaps up to go forth that I may gaze on my beloved" (p. 80 lines 11-12, 22-23). This passage is an explanation of the internal feelings of the speaker.

This, compared to Sappho's illustrates a stark difference on a similar subject, from the Poem 31 (He seems to me equal to gods that man), "...no speaking is left in me no: tongue breaks and thin fire is racing under skin and in eyes no sight and drumming fills ears and cold sweat hold me and shaking grips me all, greener than grass I am and dead- or almost I seem to me (p. 639 lines 7-18) These lines by Sappho give the impression almost of pain, speechless, the thin fire that racing under skin, the blindness, the deafness from drumming.

This is quite an image of being struck forcefully by the emotion of love.

Compared to the Egyptian love poems which invokes a rejoicing heart and the impulse to leap up invokes quite a different image. Sappho considers married life to be inadequate when compared to life with the women she had grown up with. The pressure to follow tradition, to marry and bear children would have been immense and are reflected in Poem 16("Some men say an army of horse...)," For she who overcame everyone in beauty(Helen) left her fine husband behind and went sailing to Troy.

Not for her children nor her dear parents had she a thought" (p. 638 lines 6-11) The sad reality for Sappho is that her beloved does not share her fantasies on Helen's bravery, "[for ]lightly ]reminded me now of Anaktoria who is gone"(p. 638 lines 13-15). In the book " Sappho's Lyre: Archaic Lyric and Women Poets of Ancient Greece" the author Diane Rayer discusses Sappho's composed songs of desire for relationships and for individuals. In an ode to a woman named Anaktoria, Sappho uses Helen as an example of the idea that whatever one loves appears most desirable, "... he fairest thing on the dark earth: I say it is whatever one loves... Helen, far surpassing the beauty of mortals, leaving behind the best man of all, sailed away to Troy... Reminding me now of Anaktoria being gone" (Sappho's Lyre, 1991). Sappho, according to Rayer, connects Helen's desire for Paris with the poet's desire for Anaktoria. Maybe because Sappho was also a female, she could respect Helen as a woman who surpassed the narrowly restricted sphere that a woman was allowed, and celebrated Helen for acting of her own will.

Egyptian love poems seem straightforward, i. e. , Egyptian poets speak of desire, lust, infatuation and anxiety between man and woman. Egyptian love poems describe intense lust and desires such as can be found in most of the Egyptian love poems. The desire is not uncommon, as often the beloved in a poem is still being coveted. The poet often writes with a yearning for intimacy, even privacy with the subject of their love. An example of this can be seen in “ My god, my lotus.... (Girl) “ My heart longs to go down to bathe before you, that I may show you my beauty in a tunic of the finest royal linen... I'd go down to the water with you, and come out to you carrying a red fish (S. K. : it does seem to me that speaker mentions phallus), which feels just right in my fingers”. (Boy) “ My heart is as happy in its place as fish in its pond. O night, you are mine forever, since my lady came to me! ”(p. 78. (Girl) lines 5-14, (Boy) lines 4 -7) Sappho's poetry is tender and portrays sadness.

She regards to her lost love Anaktoria in Poem 16(Some men say an army of horse.... ),” I would rather see her lovely step and the motion in her face than chariots of Lydians...” The Egyptian love poems describe the feelings of yearning and the anticipation of possibilities as in “ The Beginning of the song that Diverts the Heart”,” The first to come takes my bait... My heart desires you. Let us release it together...You are here with me, as I set the snare. Going to the field is pleasant (indeed) for one who loves it” These examples show the contrast etween the two styles and what would be called the superiority of Sappho. Ellen Green in her book “ Reading Sappho: Contemporary Approaches” considers Sappho's poetry as a powerful,

influential voice in the Western cultural tradition (Reading Sappho, 1996). A legendary literary figure, Sappho has attracted readers, critics, and biographers ever since she composed poems on the island of Lesbos at the close of the seventh century B. C. Bringing together some of the best recent criticism on the subject.

This is not to say that Egyptian love Poems doesn't have merit but Sappho's use of negative emotion complex imagery to describe a generally positive emotion that has universal meaning is quite impressive. Works Cited  
Puchner, Martin, et al. The Norton Anthology Of World Literature, 3d edition. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012. Print. Rayer, Diane. Sappho's Lyre: Archaic Lyric and Women Poets of Ancient Greece. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991. Print. Greene, Ellen. Reading Sappho: Contemporary Approaches. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996. Print.